

## LYAC Member Spotlight Commentary



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From our perspective—the youth’s perspective—local and international decisions are often made without consulting the full range of sources. What source are the decision makers, our representatives, overlooking?

Truly, there is only one under-represented minority in politics—the youth. Whereas citizens over age eighteen may vote to participate directly in our democratic political process, those below that age have little except their voices. Nonetheless, this is a precious gift, and with its power comes an important responsibility. We must actively involve ourselves in civics and present our perspective to those with a direct influence in politics, for collaboration is the only method for achieving political success.

Specifically, the Louisiana Legislative Youth Advisory Council (LYAC) provides a means through which motivated students may pursue a more direct connection with state politics. By involving the youth in Louisiana’s legislative and policy issues as well as other initiatives and activities organized and carried out by various state agencies, LYAC is providing a more direct outlet for civic involvement to students with a passion for politics.

I am proud to be one of those students. I have experienced first-hand the enormous impact of political involvement with LYAC. Subsequently, my perspectives have undergone a series of changes because of my exposure to a variety of opinions that I would not have explored otherwise.

When I applied for LYAC, I established two goals: to raise my voice and share ideas that could have a real impact on my community and state with a think-tank of peers. The opportunities that LYAC gave me improved my ability to communicate with a variety of audiences. However, my second goal was far more difficult to accomplish. As a council, we learned from experience that change can only happen when groups work together to address a common cause. For example, our largest initiative, the Lighten-Up Louisiana Youth Physical Fitness Campaign, was multifaceted to say the least. Had one of us individually attempted to develop and operate the program, failure would have been inevitable—but we created an exceptional program with the help of Mr. Rudy Macklin, executive director of the Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness. Over time, we hope that this program and further efforts from LYAC can alleviate more of the obesity problem in Louisiana.

Achieving my second goal was even more important because of its larger impact on our state and the cooperative effort put forth by all LYAC members. It serves as a symbol that children can make a difference. When working together, they can achieve anything. Their potential should be recognized. If children are capable of improving the lives of Louisianans by providing a path toward a healthy lifestyle, imagine what else they can do!

A motivational speaker once told a group of my peers, “You are the leaders of tomorrow.” Though this is certainly true, I must present a differing opinion. When given the opportunity, we can become the leaders of today! With our voices, we have the potential to change the world. We require only a representative to listen and provide the means by which our dreams of progress may be realized. The Louisiana Legislative Youth Advisory Council was established for this specific purpose and successfully continues to serve as an intermediary between the youth and their local and state representatives.